

Thanks

Funders

Hackney Parochial Foundation, The Tudor Trust, Quaker Homeless Action, Sydney Black Charitable Trust, Parish of St Mary, Stoke Newington, Big Lottery Fund, Streetsmart, The Goldsmiths Company, North London Progressive Synagogue, Coutts Charitable Trust, London Borough of Hackney, Chelsea Building Society, Wates Foundation.

Local Shops

Who donate food, especially Gibbers, Fresh and Wild, Euphorium Bakery and Ali and the team at Church Street Supermarket.

Father Michael and all at **Our Lady of Good Counsel**.

Individual supporters

Especially from St Mary's Stoke Newington.

Workers from partner agencies

Linda Sarroti Health Access worker from Hackney 180 and Christina Barrett from Hackney Community College.

Walthamstow Sai Group

Who prepare and deliver a delicious curry once a month.

Photography

Thanks to the Incredible Brendini for the photos in this report.

Volunteers, supporters and friends

Who give so generously of their time and effort. Without you the project could not run.

Can you help?

NLAH relies on volunteers and all kinds of donations to provide this much needed service.

If you would like to support our work please contact Alastair Murray, Centre Manager:

North London Action for the Homeless

Church Hall,
24-30 Bouverie Road,
Stoke Newington,
London N16 0AJ

T 020 8802 1600

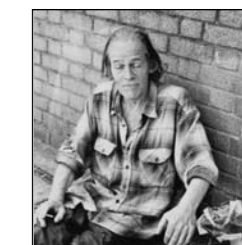
E admin@nlah.org.uk

W www.nlah.org.uk



Annual Report 2006

North London Action for the Homeless



“I have been coming to the drop in centre for quite some time now and have found the volunteers to be very helpful, friendly and easy to approach. The centre is especially good for those who are on the streets and are unable to fend for themselves.

Also there are those who do have somewhere but are very isolated. Coming to the centre gives them a chance to meet with other people and socialize, which everyone enjoys.

Thank you!”

All quotes throughout our Annual Report are from regular visitors to our drop-in centre

“I hope this centre remains open because it helps a lot of people with street problems”



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North London Action for the Homeless

Church Hall, 24-30 Bouverie Road London N16 0AJ T 020 8802 1600 E admin@nlah.org.uk

NLAH Chair's report 2005-6

We have again seen improvements and growth to the service being provided by NLAH to clients. The numbers of clients has continued to rise but importantly we have not seen a repeat of the problems that we experienced over the last few years when the night shelter was being held in St Mary's on a Thursday night. Numbers had increased to over 60 and tensions between our regular clients and those from the night shelter created difficulties for clients, staff and volunteers. After a lot of discussion and negotiation with the team that plan the winter night shelters they agreed not to use St Mary's in Stoke Newington as the venue on Thursday nights. We are very grateful to them for the effort they put in to re-organising their hugely important service but it has ensured that the service being provided by NLAH has been running safely for staff, volunteers and all the clients of the project.

We have seen an increase in the numbers of clients from East European countries and from Poland in particular. While we are pleased to welcome them to the project it is a sad reflection of the Government's failure to put sensible procedures in place to ensure that people coming to the UK to seek work are given advice and practical assistance in seeking work and ensuring that they know their rights. There has also been a failure to provide any sort of basic safety net meaning that many are left destitute.

We were very pleased to welcome Diane Abbott, the MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington to speak at our AGM in October. She covered a wide range of topics but in particular answered some questions on the issue of the housing problems being faced by many East Europeans living in Hackney. The Vice Chair of NLAH, Mark Palframan pointed out the tragic case reported in Tower Hamlets of a Latvian man who died in a local park and asked for her response and whether anything was being done to prevent this occurring again. Ms Abbott noted her concern about this issue and volunteered to work with us on this issue. We have since then been liaising with Ms Abbott and with other local homeless charities and projects to try and bring some attention to this pressing issue.

At the AGM, Jon agreed to continue as treasurer and has continued to do a very good job of not only managing accounts but regularly setting out our income and expenditure forecast for the years to come. Jon also continues to play a hugely valuable role in fund-raising for the project. Anne and Rachel have continued to do a great job as our joint secretaries and contributors to the work of the Management Committee and Mark, our Vice Chair brings a wealth of experience from his work with the Simon Community and as a former Manager at NLAH. Other regular members of the Management Committee are Tom Rubens, Pete Lumsden and Michael Ellman who bring judgement and good sense to our meetings.

One of the most important developments for NLAH has been the decision by the Management Committee to focus on attaining Quality Mark through the Homeless Link Quality Toolkit. This is a rigorous process of self-assessment and the staff and Management Committee have devoted a considerable amount of time to developing and improving our policies and procedures for the better running of the

project. This is not just a paper exercise but about assessing all aspects of the services we provide to ensure that we provide an excellent service to clients and support and our staff and volunteers. We are not there yet, but we are committed to finalising the work that needs doing and completing the process over the coming year.

Alastair, our Centre Manager is playing a key role in NLAH's aim to complete the self-assessment process for Quality Mark and as part of this organised an Away Day for the management committee and volunteers. This was a highly successful day in which we were able to focus on the bigger picture and by looking at what the values are that underpin the work that we do at NLAH and how we put these values into action.

Alastair has continued to build on his previous good work and is well liked and respected by all involved in the project. He has maintained the additional services for clients such as the Cook and Eat group and literacy classes and there is also a volunteer who provides regular hair cuts for the clients. He has also organised other activities which raise the profile of NLAH in the local community. One of these is the annual Burns Night fundraising evening, which was again a successful and enjoyable evening at which Ross provided some wonderful food and Alastair and his band provided the entertainment. Another was a new initiative and for the first year, NLAH had a stall at StokeFest held in Clissold Park in Stoke Newington which brought a lot of interest from festival goers and introduced NLAH to many local people.

Helen who has now been with NLAH for two years, continues to provide an excellent welfare rights service for NLAH clients. As Chair, I have carried out regular file reviews with Helen and have consistently found that she is able to deal with client's problems swiftly and effectively. She is well liked by clients who return regularly to seek her advice and assistance. She deals with a wide range of issues, principally concerning housing and welfare benefits but also many other problems that she outlines in her report. She also attends the Single Homelessness Forum in Hackney and other networks such as the Vulnerable People's Partnership Forum on behalf of NLAH.

As part of Helen's role in co-ordinating with other local charities and council bodies, she recently prepared a submission to Hackney Council to highlight the particular concerns that NLAH would wish to have addressed by the Council in their Homelessness Strategy. In particular, Helen pointed out the inadequacy of provision in the borough for people who are judged not to be priority homeless and therefore not the council's responsibility to house. She then makes a number of practical suggestions such as the setting up of a rent deposit scheme, which has been long promised, ensuring housing benefit meets the cost of private rents and providing short term emergency accommodation for the single homeless while housing need is assessed. NLAH has an important role to play in raising the issues facing our clients with our local and national representatives and pushing for solutions.

Since last year, we have had a third member of staff in the position of Cook at the drop in. Sophie took over the post from Joyce and did an excellent job, building up a friendly and supportive role with clients and with volunteers. She left NLAH in December to travel to South America and we wish her all the best in this. Ross, who had been running the Cook & Eat classes on a Thursday evening has now been the cook since January 2006 and is proving to be a popular addition to the team and continues to provide the quality vegetarian meals that the clients have come to expect.

This year has been a stable year financially for the Service and the details of our funders and our financial position are given in the report of our Treasurer, Jon Clarke.

We continue to receive generous donations of fruit and vegetables from Gibbers of Seven Sisters Road, and Euphorium bakers in Islington supply all our needs for bread, while Fresh and Wild in Stoke Newington Church Street give other green groceries. In addition every month we receive a full Indian meal for all our clients from the Sai Baba group, which makes a pleasant change which is much appreciated by most of the clients. These donations make all the difference to our service, both financially and particularly in terms of quality of the food we can supply.

NLAH depends on the volunteers who attend regularly on Tuesdays and Thursdays to cook and clean and without whom we could not function. They befriend and support our clients and make the service warm and welcoming. I attend the drop-in from time to time on a Thursday evening and enjoy the supportive and friendly atmosphere in the kitchen and the hall. I would particularly like to thank (and I don't think anyone will mind me singling them out), William and Francis. William who is really the fastest washer-upper in the east and Francis who is a regular, essential and good humoured member of the team. William has recently moved away from London and we wish him well in the future.

We are pleased that both our regular clients and those new to NLAH continue to use our service for the good quality food and to enjoy the friendly and welcoming atmosphere.

Hannah Rought-Brooks

Chair



Alastair Murray with a couple of our regulars

Manager's report 2005-06

Looking back over the year at NLAH, many pictures of the people who come to the drop come to mind. There are those who arrive regularly in a terrible condition, sometimes with open sores, filthy clothes and smelling strongly of alcohol. Others look lost, lonely and bewildered, perhaps new to the experience of using a dropin centre like ours, and hoping for some help to find their bearings. Then there are those who come simply for the food and a chat and don't seem to have major issues in their lives except perhaps just good, old fashioned poverty.

Our advice worker, Helen, is often able to make a difference to someone's circumstances, especially if they are having problems with their welfare benefits. Paradoxically we have least to offer someone who is homeless, as we have no referral rights to hostels. This is a continuing source of frustration to us, especially as we call ourselves North London Action for the Homeless! She has been invited to join the LB Hackney homelessness strategy group, to improve the help available for single, so called "non priority" homeless people.

The other things we provide at the dropin also make a difference, though, especially the food. People have said to me on a number of occasions over the time I've been with NLAH that we have actually saved their lives. This really puts the work in perspective.

Of course it's great to save people from drowning. It's also important, expanding the analogy, to look up stream to ask why so many are falling, or even being pushed into the river? One example of this important, longer term preventative work would be our involvement in the local homelessness strategy.

The other big example of a gap in the safety net is the lack of any kind of help for Polish and other new Europeans coming to the UK to find work since EU expansion in May 2004. There is still no dedicated job centre type facility for people arriving in London, to help them get on to the worker's registration scheme and find out about employment and accommodation. Some of the most abject and destitute clients who come to NLAH are from these countries, who scrape by with handouts from centres like ours and the occasional day's labouring work when they can find it.

Drugs, alcohol and poor mental health are the other major life issues that many drop in clients face. We offer hospitality and assistance to all who come to NLAH and try to support people toward appropriate sources of help whenever we can.

Thank you for taking the time to read this report, and I do hope you will continue to support the work NLAH does, whether as a local resident, volunteer, funder or friend.

Alastair Murray

Manager

“Excellent staff and very good food”

“Very efficient”

Advice Worker's report

This was another busy year for the advice service, in which I dealt with 331 enquiries over 85 sessions, an average of almost four per session. 36% of cases were benefits enquiries and 27% were housing related, leaving a large category of 37% described as 'Other' in the statistics. It may give a flavour of the range of subjects dealt with if I list some of the queries dealt with in this category: access to health services; disputed utility bills; disrepair; applications to charities; leisure activities; training; explanation of correspondence sent to client; obtaining furniture; obtaining birth certificate.

With regard to benefits enquiries, I have dealt with some cases where decisions made by the benefits service have been made over the telephone and clients have not known how to challenge them. Because overall numbers are relatively small it is impossible to say whether these are isolated instances or whether this is a trend, but if decisions continue to be made in this way it is likely that an increasing number of clients will need to turn to advice services such as ours when they wish to challenge a decision. A very satisfying aspect of the benefits work has been helping clients who have turned sixty claim pension credit, resulting in a substantial increase in their income.

The 27% of housing related enquiries include many homeless people as well as enquiries from clients who are tenants who have sought information on various issues including transfers or choice based lettings or who required me to advocate on their behalf with their landlord. This taken together with the 'Other' category of advice work shows that the advice service is not only working for homeless people but is also by means of advice, information and advocacy supporting many clients in their tenancies.

The situation for single homeless people continues to be bleak. I regularly attend local forums convened by LB Hackney where I try to ensure that the needs of our homeless clients are kept on the agenda; these include the Single Homelessness Forum and the Vulnerable People's Partnership Forum, and I also attended a consultation meeting run by LB Hackney's Supporting People Team. However, the underlying problem is that most of our clients though homeless and often with additional support needs are not 'vulnerable' in the strict statutory sense and are therefore not 'priority homeless', in other words not the council's duty to house. The impact of this would be lessened if there was affordable,

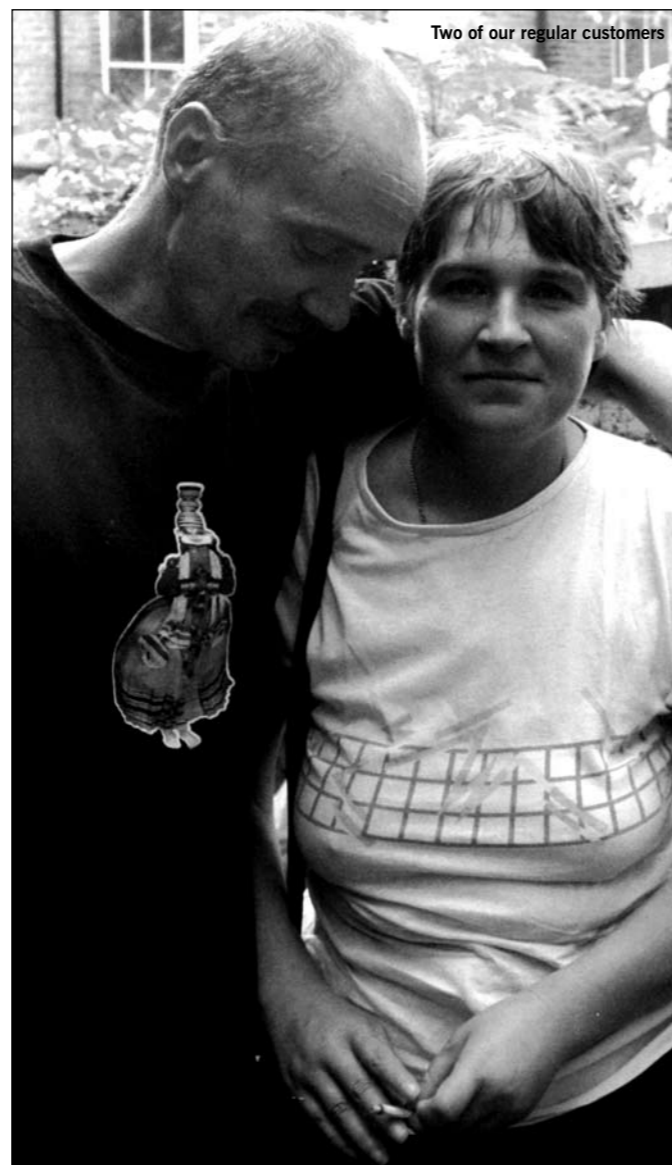


Just some of our volunteers

accessible and appropriate accommodation for them in the private sector in the borough but it seems to us that this is not the case. One indication that there is great unmet need was that the churches' winter shelter which was open in the borough for three months January to March inclusive was overwhelmed by the number of clients turning up each night and soon had to give priority to existing clients which meant that other homeless people had to be turned away.

At time of writing LB Hackney is consulting interested parties about its homelessness strategy which is currently being revised. We have taken the opportunity of bringing to the council's attention via a written submission to the consultation process the problems faced in accessing accommodation by people who are not deemed to be priority homeless and who are on low incomes. We very much hope that the revised homelessness strategy will make better provision for these clients.

Helen Martyn
Advice Worker



Two of our regular customers

Treasurer's report

The year which ended 31st March 2006, and the period since then, have again been periods of financial stability for NLAH. At the year end we had net assets of £15,907 (2005: £13,218).

Our assets are mainly cash, as in previous years, and our liabilities are also relatively simple: we have an accrued PAYE creditor and some other accruals, and we have deferred income in relation to some of the grants funding we received prior to the year end. The deferred income is for grants where the money was received before the year end but the funding relates to the current year ie 2006/07.

In terms of revenue and expenditure during the year, our total income was £42,437 (2005: £41,199). Our expenditure totalled £39,748 compared to £34,846 in the previous year, a rise of 14%. The main increases have been as follows:

- Salary costs, which increased by £2,886. This is mainly because of salary rises but also because in 2004/05 the welfare rights worker was not in post for the entire year.
- Rent has increased from £1,440 to £2,300, after not having risen for some time.
- Sundry expenses have increased by £979. The biggest single cause of this was expenditure on a worker for the cook-and-eat group for part of the year.

Other than the above, some individual cost items have risen and some fallen. All these figures are shown in more detail in the accounts.

Most of our income continues to derive from grants. Our largest funder remains the Big Lottery Fund which funds the Centre Manager position and some associated costs. This grant has now entered its final year in 2006/07. Other significant funders in the year have been:

- London Borough of Hackney, through their voluntary sector grants programme administered by the Association of London Government, who granted us £10,000 increased from £4,878 in the previous year.
- The Wates Foundation grant is continuing to fund the cook and associated costs.
- Streetsmart have awarded us a further grant of £6,000.

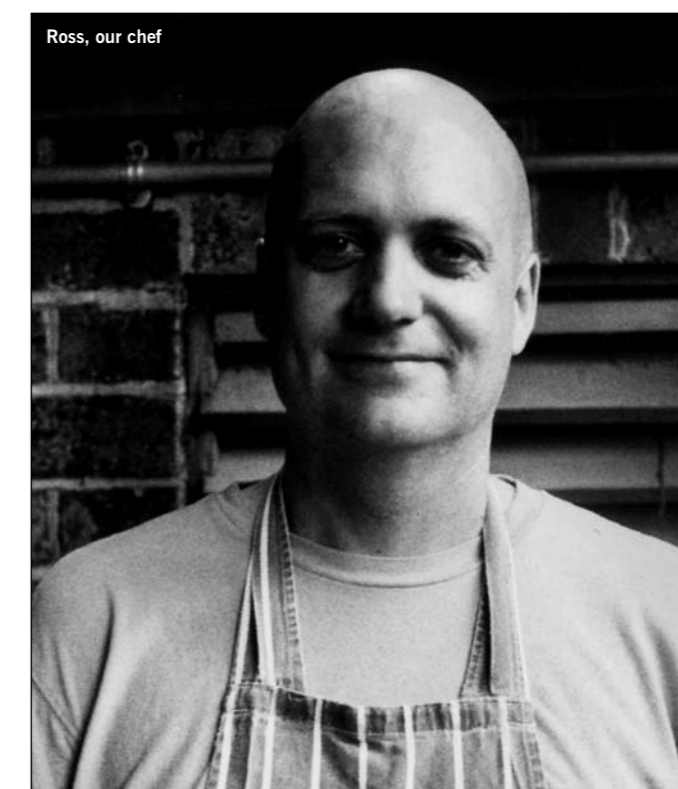
There have been a number of smaller grants, including from Sydney Black Charitable Trust, Parish of St Mary Stoke Newington, North London Progressive Synagogue, Coutts Charitable Trust, and a local shop, Fresh & Wild. We are very grateful to all of these organisations, as well as to local businesses which support us with donations of food and to the many individuals who have provided us with charitable donations. All grants are listed in the full accounts (note 2). In addition to these sources of income, our party in January raised almost £600 this year.

In addition to all these sources of financial and material support, we remain extremely grateful for the time and commitment of our volunteers. Out of the more than thirty people who make our service work, only the three staff members are paid. When you consider that most of our food is given free of charge, we remain very good 'value for money'.

We have reported in previous years that we are keen to establish more of our funding on a long-term basis. We are building longer-term relationships with some of our funders, but this work continues. A priority for us in this year is to establish replacement funding for the Centre Manager in future years as well as to find sources of multi-year funding for the Welfare Rights worker.

Fundraising activities are now being led by myself and Alastair, with the support of a sub-committee of the main board. We have been lucky enough to find several new volunteers who are making a significant contribution to our activities in this area.

Jonathan Clarke
Treasurer



Ross, our chef

“Very contented,
friendly, very
organised.”

Financial Statement

Statement of Financial Activities

For the year ended 31 March 2006

	2006	2005
Incoming resources		
Grants	40,294	39,068
Donations	1,520	1,075
Fundraising activities (party)	583	741
Bank interest	40	315
Total incoming resources	42,437	41,199
Resources expended		
Fundraising / publicity	142	457
Food and supplies	1,952	1,668
Salary costs	28,479	25,593
Recruitment and training	883	1,232
Rent	2,300	1,440
Subscriptions	650	635
Insurance and professional membership	913	685
Telephone	576	724
Printing, postage and stationery	645	547
Depreciation	205	249
Independent examiner's fees	500	500
Volunteer expenses	150	0
Rubbish collection	949	691
Sundry expenses	1,404	425
Total resources expended	39,748	34,846
Net movement in funds	2,689	6,353
Total funds brought forward	13,218	6,865
Total funds carried forward	15,907	13,218

The trustees confirm that the accounts on these pages are a summary of the information contained in the full annual accounts, approved on 2nd August 2006. The summarised accounts may not contain sufficient information to allow a full understanding of the financial affairs of the charity. For further information the full annual accounts should be consulted. Copies of these, upon which the Independent Examiner has reported without qualification, have been delivered to the Charity Commission and are available on request from NLAH, Church Hall, 24-30 Bouverie Road, Stoke Newington, London N16 0AJ

By order of the board.
2nd August 2006

Balance sheet

As at 31 March 2006

	2006	2005
Tangible fixed assets	258	298
Current assets		
Debtors and prepayments	731	550
Cash at bank and in hand	26,150	23,180
	26,881	23,730
Creditors falling due within one year		
Creditors and accruals	2,779	2,118
Deferred income	8,453	8,692
	11,232	10,810
Net current assets	15,649	12,920
Net assets	15,907	13,218
Funds		
Unrestricted income fund - designated	8,712	6,700
Unrestricted income fund - not designated	3,115	1,734
Restricted income funds	4,080	4,784
	15,907	13,218

I have examined the summarised accounts of North London Action for the Homeless for the year ended 31 March 2006. The trustees are responsible for preparing the summarised accounts in accordance with the recommendations of the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice. I have carried out the procedures I consider necessary to ascertain whether the summarised accounts are consistent with the full accounts from which they have been prepared.

In my opinion the summarised accounts are consistent with the full accounts for the year ended 31 March 2006.

Kim D Hooper
58 Knebworth Avenue, London E17 5AJ
2nd August 2006

Trustees report

Trustees:

Michael Ellman, Hannah Rought-Brooks, Anne Goldstein, Jonathan Clarke, Rachel Neill, Mark Palframan

North London Action for the Homeless exists to promote charitable purposes for the benefit of the community in the London Boroughs of Hackney, Haringey and Islington, especially with a view to the relief of homelessness and assistance to the homeless. This has been achieved by the organisation and running of a drop in centre for the homeless twice a week at the Church Hall at Our Lady of Good Counsel church on Bouverie Road, where free meals are provided together with advice on welfare rights and housing and associated matters, health access advice and clothing. The project also assists clients to develop lifeskills, particularly in the form of literacy classes and Cook and Eat sessions. There have been no material changes to these policies since the last annual report.

The charity is organised by a management committee, which appoints three part-time members of staff; the manager, welfare rights adviser and a cook. The Centre Manager has responsibility for the day to day running of the centre and for the recruitment and management of a large number of volunteers, principally to provide the meals, but also to help with fundraising.

NLAH has provided full three-course freshly cooked meals to some 40-60 clients at each session through the year (a total of over 5000 meals), and has been able to assist many clients with a range of problems, principally concerning welfare benefits and housing. The Welfare Rights Service has dealt with over 300 enquiries for welfare advice. The charity relies on many volunteers who give their services free every week or from time to time, and on the generosity of local greengrocers and bakers.

The charity's funds have been applied principally to salaries and rent, with a small amount being applied to food and equipment, and these are the purposes for which the funds are held. The financial position at the date of the balance sheet covers outgoings for some months to come, and thanks to the considerable efforts of our treasurer and manager and from time to time other volunteer fundraisers, the Trustees are satisfied that funding of the charity is stable.

The Centre Manager is funded by a grant from the Big Lottery Fund and the Welfare Rights Adviser is funded by a grant from the Association of London Government. We have received grants from the Wates Foundation, Streetsmart and continue to receive money from our regular funders, the Tudor Trust, Hackney Parochial and the Parish of St Mary Stoke Newington together with many other who are all mentioned in the full accounts. None of the major donors plays a key role in its affairs. The charity's assets are available and adequate to fulfill all current obligations of the charity. While NLAH is in touch with other charities and community groups in the area, it does not have a specific relationship with any of them.

Hannah Rought-Brooks
(For the Trustees)

User Representative's report

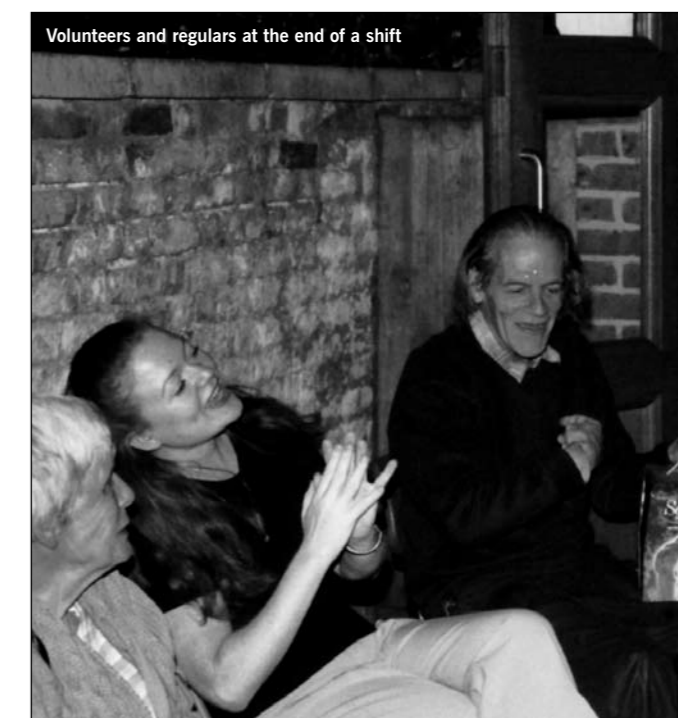
One thing about NLAH I find quite staggering is that for an organisation that deals with so much change and with so many variables it maintains such continuity of purpose. This is something in which all involved should take much pride. Clients are pretty much in a constant state of flux, and there is always turnover amongst volunteers, yet it's ethos and services appear unaffected. I would suggest that this is a huge achievement.

I don't find it especially easy to take an overview of the past 12 months, but one thing that has stood out has been the large number of eastern Europeans using the church hall at Bouverie Rd. Initially I felt they were met by other clients with some resentment, suspicion and mistrust. Perhaps that's just a typical British response to difference? However, and I'm not banging any political drum here, right now, and this has been the case for a while, people are quite accepting and friendly in spite of the language difficulties. Any resentments have all but disappeared.

I still feel that my fellow user representative Tony and I have a useful role to play on the management committee. Things do come to our attention perhaps more readily than they would to volunteers and staff. There has been some getting used to the process. A fine example was the "Awayday" (that's training in the old parlance..), a morning that was spent looking at the ethos of NLAH, its policies and ways to move the organisation forward. This included all, volunteers, staff, the management committee and user representatives. I felt it was time very well spent and also felt that I learned more about other people and their motivations and ideas.

All things considered NLAH strikes me as being in very rude health and I am happy to play a part in that.

Grant Kingsnorth
User Representative



“I have not eaten such lovely food in over a year”